



Performance through collaboration

CEO COMMUNIQUE

24 March 2023

Soil CRC Participants Conference - Save the Date!

I am excited to announce that we are holding the 2023 Soil CRC Participants Conference in Launceston, Tasmania on 29-31 August. Following the success of the [2022 Conference](#) held in Adelaide, we are keen to bring people together again this year to hear the latest research from the Soil CRC and to exchange knowledge and discuss collaboration opportunities.

The format will be slightly different this year, with the Thursday (31 August) being dedicated to field trips to look at soil management issues in northern Tasmania. Feedback from the Adelaide conference showed that many participants wanted to see more than just a conference room when they got together with the Soil CRC and that they would welcome the opportunity to get into the field and get their hands dirty. The tours will finish in time for participants to catch late afternoon flights and connections back home.

The Tuesday (29 August) will again feature the PhD Student Workshop and project team meetings and will finish with program meetings at the end of the day, before coming together for a welcome reception.

On the Wednesday (30 August), we will highlight the work of the Soil CRC through both presentations and panel discussions before celebrating with the Conference Dinner that night.

Put the dates in your calendar and look out for further updates in coming months regarding registration and other details.

Soil CRC Participants Conference Program Committee - Expressions of Interest

Being a user-driven CRC, we are calling for expressions of interest to contribute to the Program Committee and help develop the program for this year's conference. I am keen to get a diversity of voices from farmer groups, PhD students, industry groups and researchers to ensure we have a broad input. The required commitment will be no more than a few video meetings and some time to contribute to email discussions on draft programs. (The actual organising of the conference will be done by professional conference organisers and Soil CRC staff).

Please [email me](#) expressing your interest if you would like to contribute to the Program Committee by 31

March.

Staff news

It is with great sadness that I write to you about the health of Julie Moulton who stepped down from her position as Research Administration Officer in January to focus full time on her battle with cancer. Many of you will have had interactions with Julie around project agreements, variations and reporting over the past few years, and would have found her to be extremely helpful and engaging. She spent much of 2022 enduring chemotherapy and surgery but her condition has deteriorated as the cancer has spread. We wish her well in the coming months, and I have assured her that she will always be a treasured member of the Soil CRC family.

Staff appointments

Heather Apps commenced with us in October as a casual to help process the backlog of project agreements and variations and we have now appointed her to a 12 month part-time position as a Research Contracts Officer with the CRC to continue this important work. Heather is based at Armadale and works remotely, and is making a great contribution to the team.

Following Julie's resignation, we advertised for a full-time Research Administration Officer, and I am delighted to announce that Dr Lucy Weaver will be commencing with us on 3 April. Lucy is an organic chemist by training and has worked with CSIRO as a researcher, then with Swinburne University and NSW Health as a research manager. We are excited about the new skills that Lucy will bring to the Newcastle office.

I am also excited to announce the appointment of Olivia Louis as our new Communications Manager, commencing on 18 April. Olivia has a broad and diverse history in all areas of communications and has worked in recent years at Hunter Water and Newcastle City Council. Of great relevance to this role, she was the Communications Manager for the CRC for Irrigation Futures from 2005 until its windup in 2009.

We are also recruiting for a Soil Knowledge Broker and will be conducting interviews soon. This person will help to connect our farmer group members with the researchers and vice versa to help ensure that the knowledge being generated by the Soil CRC is accessible and relevant. This will contribute to the Soil CRC's increased focus on adoption in the coming years.

Board Meetings – University of Tasmania, Hobart

In the last week of February, the Board travelled to Tasmania and met at the University of Tasmania in Hobart. There was a presentation from the host university, UTas, and research summaries from Soil CRC project leaders from the University and from two PhD students. The Patron of the Soil CRC and National Soil Advocate, Penny Wensley, and her Senior Policy Office, Sue Bestow, also jointed the meeting in Hobart.



The Board meeting with staff and students at the University of Tasmania

The next Board meeting will be held at the end of May in Newcastle and will be extended to include a strategic planning session where the Board will consider the findings of the 2022 External Review and other inputs as they develop the Soil CRC Strategic Plan for 2023-2027.

Board Meetings – remainder of 2023

In an update to previously announced arrangements, the Board has altered the venues of its August and November meetings as follows:

May 31	Newcastle	University of Newcastle
August 29	Launceston	Soil CRC Participants Conference
November 28	Canberra	Parliamentary Friends of Soils breakfast

2023 Major Investment Round 6

The latest set of project proposals were received on 2 February and are now being reviewed and assessed by the Research and Adoption Committee (RAC), with input from the Commercialisation and Intellectual Property Advisory Committee (CIPAC) for those proposals with potential commercialisation opportunities. The Board will meet by video in late April to consider the recommendations of the RAC, and it anticipated that contracted projects will commence in August.

We received 7 proposals and in total, 20 of the Soil CRC participant organisations are listed as partners on these proposals. I would like to thank everyone for their effort and collaboration in putting these proposals together, especially the proposal leaders.

Commonwealth reporting

The FY22/23 Quarter 3 is soon ending. This will cover activities from 1 January to 31 March 2023. Please note the following due dates:

- Project Quarterly Reports (PQRs) close 10 April 2023.
- Non-Project In-kind Reports (NPIKs) close 20 April 2023.

As the closure occurs over the Easter break, you are encouraged to submit as early as possible. You can now include records for all activities that you have not reported in previous reports submitted throughout the years.

I encourage everyone to review and submit details of their involvement to the projects, as well as NPIK activity. For projects, participants should reach out to their project leaders now to discuss what needs to be done. Also, a reminder that IP Registers are an important part of projects and overall research integrity. We are looking closely at these, especially overdue ones. We may withhold payments until they are submitted and deemed as acceptable by the CRC. Collectively it is up to us all to look after the IP within projects, for the broader benefit of the CRC and its partners.

We are here to help everyone submit on time, so reach out if needed. Contact projects@soilcra.com.au.

New contact point for agreements and variations

Due to the high volume of project agreements and variations, we have created a dedicated email address: 'contracts@soilcra.com.au'.

Heather Apps will be monitoring this inbox. Heather's phone number is 0427 080 567. Note that Heather works part time, Mondays to Thursdays from 12 pm NSW time and all-day Fridays.

Invoicing

In some cases, we have received invoices for project payments ahead of time, where the milestone has not yet been delivered or approved. We will hold those invoices until project delivery has been progressed and the appropriate milestones achieved. We encourage project leaders and researchers to liaise with their finance and administration teams and let them know if there are any delays in projects.

Conversely, some participant organisations are behind in their invoicing on some projects. (i.e. we want to give you money, but can't do so until we receive an invoice!). Please review your payment schedules and contact our Chief Financial Officer, Mark Flick (mark.flick@soilcra.com.au) if you are not sure where your invoices are up to.

Churchill Fellowship opportunity

Many of you might have heard of the Churchill Fellowship program. A Churchill Fellowship offers Australian citizens and permanent residents a life-changing opportunity to travel overseas for four to eight weeks to learn more about a topic or issue that they are passionate about.

Caroline Welsh, former Chair of Birchip Cropping Group and member of the Soil CRC External Review team, is sponsoring a specific fellowship for an applicant to investigate how the agriculture industry and private land managers can better respond to climate change.

Applications are open to people from all walks of life and you don't need to have an educational qualification to receive a fellowship. Applications are open now and close on 1 May at 5.00pm AEST. To find out more visit www.churchilltrust.com.au.

CEO Meetings and Travel

A highlight of February was attending evokeAG on 21-22 February in Adelaide. This conference was a showcase of agtech and innovation and highlighted the contribution that innovation can make to

agriculture. The Soil CRC hosted an exhibition stand, which Richard Doyle and myself staffed, and it was a great opportunity to explain to people some of the research that the Soil CRC is doing. Great to see many of our participants there also.



Michael Crawford and Richard Doyle at the evokeAG conference

Along with CRC Chair Paul Greenfield and PhD Program Manager Cassandra Wardle, I travelled to Brisbane in early February and met with Prof Chengrong Chen and his staff and students at Griffith University. There is a lot of passion in the research being undertaken at Griffith and some great collaboration with partners emerging.



Michael Crawford, Paul Greenfield and Cassandra Wardle meeting with staff and students at Griffith University

Next week, I will be travelling to Ingham in Queensland to speak at the annual [Regenerative Cane Farming Forum](#). I will also meet with [Burdekin Productivity Services](#) and [Herbert Cane Productivity Services](#), both of whom are Soil CRC participants, and look at some of our research in the field.

I am always happy to hear of other opportunities for engaging with Soil CRC participants across Australia.

Dr Michael Crawford

Chief Executive Officer

CRC FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE SOILS

michael.crawford@soilcra.com.au

www.soilcra.com.au

Contact list

We forward this communicate directly to staff in our Participant organisations who we believe should be receiving communications about the CRC. If you do not wish to receive communications directly, please unsubscribe below. If there are others who wish to be on the list, please forward their names to Kathy Stokes at kathy.stokes@soilcra.com.au.



Australian Government

Department of Industry,
Science and Resources

AusIndustry

Cooperative Research
Centres Program

CRC for High Performance Soils

Level 1 IDC Building
University of Newcastle
University Drive
Callaghan NSW 2308

enquiries@soilcrc.com.au

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